

# On the Scene

SPRING 2012 NEWS AND STORIES FROM THE SALVATION ARMY AUSTRALIA EASTERN TERRITORY

## Off their rockers

“We were at an age where we had sold a home, moved and retired. I was having chemo, and my dad was dying. He died and then mum got breast cancer. So I had mum at home and then the grandchildren came to stay for the school holidays and never went home.” – JENNIFER

Jennifer smiles and says that at least joining the ranks of the thousands of Australians who are full-time parenting their grandchildren has taught her about texting and mobile phones!

In the past seven years, after her daughter’s marriage broke up and drug addiction shattered the family, Jennifer and her husband have found ongoing care through support groups and training at **The Salvation Army’s** First Floor Program. Such programs include ‘Very Important Families’ (VIFs) which supports parents or partners who have a loved one with a substance use or mental health disorder, and ‘Off Our Rockers’ (OORf), a support group for grandparents (and others) parenting kin.

“I think I’ve also attended every one of the courses run at First Floor,” says Jennifer, “including a counselling course, behaviour management courses, parenting modules, stress management, relaxation classes, art therapy, first aid for grandparents, legal aid workshop,



ABOVE: JENNIFER AND HER HUSBAND LEN NOW IN HAPPIER TIMES.

plus a mobile phone course, which sounds funny, but I can’t tell you how beneficial that was.”

Like any loving grandmother, Jennifer’s eyes sparkle as she tells stories of the grandchildren she loves, but her voice quiets as she explains the emotions and events of the last seven years ‘parenting’ two of her grandchildren. “I enjoy both of them very much, but I do get tired,” she says.

“My husband is 81 and he’s not a well man – it’s not easy!”

Jennifer says with support from The Salvation Army’s First Floor Program, her daughter and her daughter’s partner are now also clean from any drug use. Her daughter takes the children to all their afternoon activities but, after so many

years, the once traumatised grandchildren are now well settled and have opted to stay with their grandparents.

Jennifer explains she never dreamed life would take the turn that it did.

She says: “As parents we thought we were doing the right thing in the way we brought up our children.

“Sadly, drugs can happen in a family at any time of one’s life cycle.”

At the time her grandchildren were left in her custody, Jennifer was not only undergoing aggressive treatment for cancer, dealing with seriously ill parents, and battling to secure care for her daughter’s new baby who was suffering drug withdrawals, but also facing severe financial issues and exhaustion.

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FOOD OR BILLS

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**PAGE 4** Food or bills – pensioners facing stark options.



**RED SHIELD APPEAL**

The Salvation Army's Appeals Director Major Jeff Winterburn has thanked Australians for their "amazing generosity" after the 2012 Red Shield Appeal exceeded target and raised \$83.5 million dollars (with around \$10 million raised through the doorknock).

At a time when many Salvation Army welfare and other centres are experiencing unprecedented requests for help, the funds raised will continue to support the ongoing and increasingly challenging work of The Salvation Army, he says.

"We really do deeply want to thank everyone who donated, both financially, or with their time," Jeff says. "Australians have yet again shown an amazing spirit of community care and generosity. It is truly humbling. You often hear people say 'thank God for the Salvos', but we say 'thank God for you.'"



To help combat the "hidden homelessness" of couch surfing, The Salvation Army's Oasis Youth Support Network recently organised The Couch Project, which encouraged Australians to raise funds and awareness by spending a night on the couch.

With 14,000 of the 32,000 homeless young Australians aged 12-25 living on the couches of friends, acquaintances, or worse, couch surfing often leads to a downward spiral of instability through a lack of privacy, security and safety.

Over \$35,000 was raised, which will go directly to support programs assisting homeless young people, including crisis and transitional accommodation, as well as educational and vocational programs.

# Salvos serve lattes by the lake



PHOTO BY PETER STOROP, REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION OF THE NEWCASTLE HERALD © COPYRIGHT 2012.

**ABOVE:** SAL'S BY THE LAKE MANAGER, RICHARD STARK, (LEFT), KATE HOLLAND AND MAJOR GAVIN WATTS, DIVISIONAL COMMANDER, NEWCASTLE & CENTRAL NSW DIVISION.

**Hundreds of people turned out recently for the grand opening of a new Salvation Army café – 'Sal's by the Lake' – at Lake Macquarie (NSW) earlier this year.**

Salvos Divisional Secretary Major Warren Parkinson says the café presents an opportunity to connect with the community. "Plus, it allows us to raise money for local community programs, as well as provide employment opportunities," he says.

The café initially hired young people who had received training through

'Nourish Café', part of the OASIS Hunter Youth Support Network (which provides training in a variety of fields such as retail and hospitality, and aims to help people enter or re-enter the workforce).

Café manager Richard Stark, says: "The café will be a family focused facility with the aim of giving friendly service at an affordable price.

"Most importantly, all profits made through the café will go towards helping fund local **Salvation Army** services in the community." *o*

**FROM PAGE 1** Jennifer says: "My daughter's rental house in my name made me responsible... In the drugged state (our daughter and partner) had done so much damage."

And so, Jennifer says, when she and her husband first went to the First Floor Program support groups, we were in a real mess.

Today, Jennifer not only finds support, but also mentors others through the new Village Exchange telephone support program. First floor OORf and SoL (Survivors of Life) facilitator Marilyn Dunn says well over 60 per cent go on from the support groups to offer

peer support to others.

Jennifer says First Floor and the support of her own church have provided an incredible life-line to herself, her husband and her grandchildren.

And she also truly believes that learning about tough love, boundaries and addictions, through the First Floor, may have also helped save her daughter's life.

"It really, really works," she says. "God blessed us the day we came into this program."

To learn more about the First Floor Program visit [www.salvos.org.au/wollongong/community/](http://www.salvos.org.au/wollongong/community/) *o*

# Compassion, care and love from above

**“A disaster is a bit like a death in the family. Everyone provides support initially, but often as time goes by, the surviving person is left to grieve alone.” – MARK BULOW**

South Queensland Salvation Army Flying Chaplain, Captain Mark Bulow, knows the joys and the potential hardships of a rural life better than most.

The Salvation Army officer is a farmer himself, and a farmer's brother, son-in-law, son, grandson and great grandson and says: “My old man lost our family farm (a wedding present to my grandmother from her parents) just before I was born, through a bad drought and some bad management.

“All his life afterwards, he saw himself as a failure. When I was a kid, after work, he would sit downstairs all by himself and just drink. It was really, really sad.”

Decades on and Mark, a qualified helicopter pilot, now heads the new Salvation Army South Queensland Flying Service, as well as the Dalby Salvation Army rural hub, that provides assistance to a number of large towns and surrounding farming areas.

He is passionate about supporting all who are in need, including farmers, and says: “With farming in general, it is a lot harder to make a living.

“So when disasters hit, there's no buffer.”

Last year, following a donation from Parmalat (the makers of Pauls Milk), The Salvation Army purchased a new helicopter for its Outback Flying Service in central Queensland and redeployed its existing Robinson 44 Raven II helicopter from Mt Isa to Dalby (which Mark will fly).

“Because of the time it takes to go out and visit people who could be five, 10, 15 hours away, the helicopter will mean that I can get out there quicker and visit more people in remote areas,” he says.

In early 2012, Mark, along with The Salvation Army Envoys Earnest and Judith McAvoy and local volunteers, fed evacuees and emergency personnel after flooding hit Roma. Flooding then moved to Mitchell, where a Salvation Army Emergency Services team of 19 fed evacuees and emergency personnel in two centres.

In the weeks, months or even years after the immediate emergency, Mark says, many who have been disaster-affected, including farmers, start to withdraw, and aggression or depression can manifest.

He says: “They look at their farms and see the water and see the crops destroyed and don't see a way out. That's the time we need to be out there again and give them a listening ear.”

To add to the ongoing support on offer, a professional Salvation Army counsellor has been employed by the hub to work in the regional centres.

When needed, Mark can fly the counsellor out to outlying towns and properties, and says it is an absolutely wonderful asset to have a professional available to make sure these people get the right assistance.

He is currently offering support to a range of disaster affected families, including a cotton farming family whose relationships are rapidly

breaking down after being wiped out by floods last year.

Mark says: “The husband said to me, ‘the wife isn't happy and wants to sell the farm, but I don't want to sell the farm because it was my dad's farm.’ I don't know exactly what he's going through, but I can relate to my experience and see the devastation in the man's eyes.

“Those eyes are my father's eyes.”

He says: “We have all got very different backgrounds and we all have different life experiences, but when someone says to me ‘look you know the crops have failed, fences broken, we've got no money,’ you can feel the pain, because you've walked the pain.

“You have to be careful when you say this because some farms have been through many generations in the family, but sometimes you can say, ‘look its only dirt, but your family will be with you forever...the most precious asset you'll ever have is your family.’”



ABOVE: CAPTAIN MARK BULOW FLIES INTO A FLOODED QUEENSLAND PROPERTY.

